

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HUD-02 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 AID-20 EB-11 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03

SS-20 DRC-01 /123 W

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R 131857Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8974

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3389

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, PGOV

SUBJ: DECREE ON SLUM ERADICATION SIGNED

REF: SANTIAGO 5777 (1973)

1. SUMMARY. DECREE CEREMONIOUSLY SIGNED JUNE 11 ESTABLISHED GOVT MACHINERY TO ELIMINATE WORST OF URBAN SLUMS AND TO MEET OTHER PRESSING NEEDS OF SLUM-DWELLERS. BY APPEARING ADDRESS LEGITIMATE PROBLEMS OF THIS LONG-NEGLECTED SECTOR OF POPULATION, GOVT OBVIOUSLY HOPES TO REAP POLITICAL BENEFITS. GOVT SPOKESMEN EMPHASIZED THIS PROGRAM ONLY PART OF GENERAL GOVT EFFORT TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR ALL CHILEANS, THUS FITTING CURRENT GOC CAMPAIGN OF FIGHTING BACK AGAINST ALLEGATIONS THAT GOVT IS INSENSITIVE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY MANY CHILEANS. WE JUDGE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM UNLIKELY MAKE MUCH IMPACT ON PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. MORE THAN SIX MONTHS AFTER ORIGINAL ANNOUNCEMENT (REFTEL), DECREE ON SLUM ERADICATION WAS SIGNED JUNE 11 DURING CEREMONY ATTENDED BY SOME 1,000 URBAN SLUM "LEADERS" IN DIEGO PORTALES BUILDING (SEAT OF GOVT). FEATURED SPEAKER MIN INTERIOR BONILLA STRESSED THAT GOVT WILL TAKE "DRASTIC, RAPID, AND EXPEDITIOUS" STEPS TO ELIMINATE SO-CALLED "TEMPORARY CAMPS (POBLACIONES DE EMERGENCIA) IN WHICH THE URBAN POOR RESIDE UNTIL COMPLETION OF PERMANENT HOUSING FACILITIES. MANY OF THE ACKNOWLEDGED 547

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POBLACIONES IN GREATER SANTIAGO AREA FALL IN THIS CATEGORY AND

HAVE EXISTED FOR YEARS. BONILLA ALSO LISTED SPECIFIC STEPS GOC HAS TAKEN IN LAST SIX MONTHS TO AID SLUM-DWELLERS, INCLUDING CLAIMED CONSTRUCTION OF 1,278 HOUSES, FIVE SCHOOLS, AND 43 CLASSROOMS PLUS INNUMERABLE MINOR CIVIL IMPROVEMENTS. MINISTER PLACED THIS PROGRAM WITHIN GENERAL CONTEXT OF GOVT CONCERN FOR LIVING CONDITIONS AND WELFARE OF POOREST SECTORS OF CHILEAN SOCIETY AND AS PART OF GOVT'S OVERALL SOCIAL PROGRAM.

3. DECREE ITSELF IS GENERALLY SIMILAR TO THAT ENVISAGED IN ORIGINAL NOVEMBER 22 ANNOUNCEMENT, WITH MAJOR EXCEPTION THAT INTERIOR MINISTRY'S EMERGENCY OFFICE RATHER THAN INDIVIDUAL MUNICIPALITIES WILL HAVE POWER TO EXPROPRIATE URBAN LAND. THAT OFFICE IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR "PLANNING, COORDINATING, AND SUPERVISING" ENTIRE PROGRAM. NO SUM IS MENTIONED FOR "SPECIAL FUND" TO FINANCE PROGRAM, DISTRIBUTION OF WHICH IS ALSO TIGHTLY CONTROLLED BY EMERGENCY OFFICE. UNLIKE NOVEMBER 22 ANNOUNCEMENT, DECREE MAKES NO REFERENCE TO FORMATION OF SLUM-DWELLER COMMITTEES (COMITES POBLACIONALES).

4. COMMENT. UNVEILING OF LONG-EXPECTED DECREE MAY HAVE BEEN TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH NINE MONTHS DATE OF COUP. IT ALSO FITS CURRENT GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN TO RESPOND FORCEFULLY TO ALLEGATIONS THAT JUNTA IS INSENSITIVE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PLIGHT OF MANY CHILEANS (SANTIAGO 3324). URBAN SLUMS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN ONE OF MOST NEGLECTED SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN CHILE, AND SQUALOR OF MANY BEGGARS DESCRIPTION. HOWEVER, SINCE GOC HAS BEEN MENTIONING EXPENDITURES FOR THIS PROGRAM IN THE RANGE OF ONLY 2 BILLION ESCUDOS (REFTEL), AT THIS POINT PROGRAM APPEARS DESIGNED MORE FOR POLITICAL THAN ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL IMPACT, ESPECIALLY WHEN VIEWED IN LIGHT OF RECENTLY ANNOUNCED MAJOR CUTBACK IN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES AND EMPLOYMENT. (SANTIAGO 3266 AND 3311).
THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: URBAN DEVELOPMENT, URBAN POPULATION, SLUMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANTIA03389
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740153-1089
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740648/aaaaboww.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SANTIAGO 5777 (1973)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 SEP 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DECREE ON SLUM ERADICATION SIGNED
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005